

# THE FISHER REFORMATION 1953-1961

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## Editor's Introduction:

*In the 1950s, growing national dissatisfaction with the public school curriculum and the preparation of teachers fed directly into the political ambitions of a young Democratic legislator, State Senator Hugo Fisher. Armed with his party's and the Governor's support, Fisher pressed for stronger subject matter preparation of all teachers—elementary and secondary—and reduced emphasis of their pedagogical preparation. In this chapter, Inglis draws upon primary documents including interviews with key players to tell the story of the first wave of California credential reform.*

A comprehensive review of the events and forces working toward significant teacher education reform in 1961 reads like a complex, multi-plotted novel. No single chain of events throughout the 1950s led logically and neatly from one step to a successive one. Rather, profound international and national happenings merged alternately with purely California considerations to result in a climatic session of the 1961 legislature. This complex political mix includes:

- An aggressive drive by the Soviet Union toward some kind of world supremacy.
- An anxiety in the public mind regarding national chances for survival in a once-again more dangerous world.
- A sincere belief, on the part of many California educators, that teacher credentialing was too complex.
- A strong desire, by some university professors and citizens, to return to a distinctly more academic emphasis in the public schools.

- A calculated political strategy, on the part of a major political party, to display a demonstrable public policy achievement.

Within all of these forces were innumerable personal ambitions of individuals and special interest groups, whose perceptions and motives were a large part of the underlying fire-storm that ensued.

### **The Beginning Rumbings**

Rising voices for reform appeared simultaneously in the public, in the academic community, and in the profession. National restlessness and uncertainty about teacher competency and the quality of instruction began to appear five or six years before the advent of Sputnik. Writings from the early 1950s expressed deep disdain for “progressive education” in the public schools; as a logical extension of the concern, this antipathy also included teacher education. Published in magazines, books and other sources, these criticisms were cutting and persuasive, declaring strong dislike and distrust of professional “educationists.” This storm of public criticism reached its peak in 1958, incited by the Soviet launch of Sputnik in fall of 1957. Their number increased sharply during late 1957 and all of 1958, with more appearing during the first six months of 1958 than in all of 1957; a decided preponderance focused on the perceived over-emphasis upon professional methodology in the preparation of teachers (Hendrick, 1967, p. 141). A few of the better-known books of the time illustrate this outlook: *Educational Wastelands* by Arthur Bestor; *Quackery in the Public Schools*, by Albert Lynd; and *The Diminished Mind*, by Mortimer Smith.

In addition to this outpouring of written criticism about the perceived sad state of the public schools, a concerted political effort organized like-minded people. The Council for Basic Education (CBE)—formed in 1956 with the avowed goal “to strengthen the basic

subjects of English, mathematics, science, history, and foreign languages in American schools”—carried an incessant theme. In California the CBE rapidly became a special interest group, seeking to influence schools and, especially, the legislature to reform public school curricula and teacher education programs.<sup>1</sup> Its vigorous pronouncements reached many receptive ears among the general public and the higher education academic community in 1956 and 1957; its influence accelerated greatly following Sputnik I.

Meanwhile, the background of unrest and dissatisfaction built by these factors contributed to a unique political development in the academic community. An *ad hoc* committee, composed exclusively of academic college and university faculty in southern California, organized a group to influence the political process surrounding credential reform. The Committee for Improving Teacher Education (CITE) was formed, listing among its members the presidents of two liberal arts colleges (Occidental and Claremont) and other prominent individuals and pointedly lacking traditional professional educators—among others Edward Teller, physicist and Nobel Prize winner; Harold Arey, chemist and Nobel Prize winner; and Harry Ashmore, Editor-in-Chief, *Encyclopedia Britannica*. This group became a surprisingly potent behind-the-scenes force during the evolution of the Fisher Act, the major reform of teacher education and credentialing in 1961, although its existence and goals were virtually unknown to the general public. CITE called for steps to return the public schools to the academicians, saying “while professional education departments might be tolerated, they should serve a minor role in teacher preparation. Leadership roles in the public schools should be limited to those trained in one of the traditional liberal arts” (Cannon 1964, 7). Ultimately, CITE members appeared before legislative committees, lobbied members of those committees in person and by mail and telephone, and testified at State Board of Education meetings when teacher education reform was the prominent issue. Some prime movers within this organization—Harry Girvetz, for one—had direct contact with key members of the Governor's staff and with Senator Hugo Fisher himself during the genesis of the drive to pass the Fisher Act.

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In fact, the CBE continued for several decades to be a vocal and well-publicized nationwide voice for those holding a conservative view of public education's method and value. It still exists today, but its voice is far more muted and obscure.

The interests of CBE, CITE and other conservative groups—including, interestingly, the California Federation of Teachers (CFT)—converged in one belief: the public schools of California had lost sight of their major purpose, to inculcate skills in the basic subjects in the state’s school children. The schools, thereby, had added many “frills” and non-essentials to the curriculum; they had employed teachers who had been thoroughly “brainwashed” by the college departments of education of the State—so went the repeated messages of these groups. These activists sought, too, to find effective ways to force the elimination of superfluous school subjects, to reduce drastically the “professional” preparation of teachers, and to enact upgraded requirements to become a public school administrator.

This groundswell of public demand was preceded, ironically, by the profession's comprehensive, sustained and sincere effort to improve the confusing, variegated requirements and standards established by the early 1950s. Importantly—yet lost in the intense political storm that was to occur follow—on 7 December 1954, the President of the California Council on Teacher Education (CCET) and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction jointly appointed the Committee for Revision of the Credential System in California, a fourteen-member representative statewide committee, to study state credentialing policy and recommend changes. For five and one-half years this committee and its participants conducted an intensive drive to reach statewide professional consensus on a new credential structure and on rigorous standards for preparation. Four milestones mark the work of this committee:

March 1954 to May 1957: The committee met often, and ultimately devised and presented to the State Superintendent a set of recommendations reducing the number of basic credentials to four from forty (along with several other items).

May 1957 to Spring 1958: Publicity about the work and recommendations of the committee-solicited suggestions and comment from the field. Seven regional meetings provided the opportunity to all professionals concerned to react to the committee's recommendations.

December 1958 to March 1959: Eight regional meetings, all convened by the State Superintendent, were held statewide on Saturdays so that professional and lay persons could attend and react.

January 1960: The State Board of Education conducted a hearing to present the thoroughly discussed the recommendations. It included views, biases and objective thinking of such diverse organizations as the California Congress of Parents and Teachers, the California School Boards Association (CSBA), the Citizens Advisory Committee, and numerous professional organizations.

In February 1960, the State Board officially approved new standards, which were designed to serve as the basis for developing legislation to create a new and improved credential structure for the state. Two essential features shaped the Board's action: (a) adoption of fourteen “basic principles” dealing with the overall credential structure; and (b) recommendations for the establishment of *five* “standard” credentials. This recommendation significantly departed from the Committee's original intent to develop four credentials covering the entire field of public school service and instead listed five credentials, a development later to influence the Fisher Act; with its strong objective to sharply reform credentials, the Fisher Act contained essentially the same five credentials, at least by title.

The Committee for Revision’s goal had been to overhaul and streamline the unwieldy and outdated credential structure, which had gradually evolved over decades. That work reached fruition in early 1960. Yet, by early 1961, less than a year later this same Board actively supported proposed legislation that opposed those same relatively non-controversial ideas. In a short period of time, this professional group’s work was overturned, yet its ideas and recommendations were to appear in other venues as the saga unfolded—with seldom, if ever, any attribution given.

### **The Gathering Storm of Reform**

Despite the strengthening signs of discontent with the quality of public education, prior to 1958 the California Legislature showed little interest in the issue. However, as the storm warnings became more evident in early 1958, intensified by the near-universal distress about Soviet advances in science, it acknowledged the growing political magnetism of the issue. An editorial in the *Sacramento Bee* suddenly crystallized these vague fears, which had been nascent for half a decade. Seeking to influence directly its backdoor neighbor, the California Legislature, the *Sacramento Bee* proposed “the creation—by the legislature—of a joint legislative-citizen commission on education instructed to analyze all facets of education—finances, goals, curricula, the teacher problem, equipment, etc.—and to conduct public hearings on education in various geographical areas” (*Sacramento Bee*, March 24, 1958). Because the legislature at that time did not convene in general session in even-numbered years, it could not conduct a full-scale investigation itself in 1958. Instead, realizing the need for information as a prelude to some kind of action and spurred by the *Bee*’s editorializing, it established the Joint Interim Committee on Education, whose members represented both houses. This Committee then became the legislature’s official study group. It became obvious to legislative leaders that an investigation was in order.

The Joint Interim Committee moved rapidly to appoint a Citizen's Advisory Commission on Education, a fact-gathering body composed of representatives of the public. Gordon Winton, a prominent Assembly Member at the time and a member of the Joint Interim Committee itself, described the appointment process. Several weeks after the legislature adjourned in June, members of the Joint Interim Committee reconvened to establish this Commission. Members brought names for consideration by the entire Committee, including many suggested by the candidates themselves. Several legislators suggested three or four names, many of whom were essentially “people with axes to grind” and/or who held conservative views of public education (Winton interview 1966). According to Carl Larson, a State Department staff member at the time, initially a requirement for being appointed was “who had the biggest beef” with education. The Joint Committee, realizing that this created too obvious an imbalance, subsequently established broader representation. In the process, 500 names were cut to twenty-seven, who became the

official Commission (Larson interview 1966). William Lawlor, a Glendale dentist, became the first permanent chair of the Citizens Commission.

The Commission's charge from the Legislature was to gather public input in a broad and responsible way, to develop a summary of its findings, and to report back. It held public hearings up and down the state, listening to the complaints and occasional compliments and defenses of the schools by citizens and professionals alike. In all, 287 persons with highly divergent backgrounds were listed as witnesses during this long process of information gathering. In due time—almost two years—and under pressure from the chair of the Joint Interim Committee, the Commission hurried its report to print. Lawlor, fearing that the Legislature would not issue a timely or objective report of the findings and recommendations, had the Commission's final report printed privately. The recommendations embodied the findings of its subcommittees, which delved into every major aspect of public education: (1) teacher personnel, teaching and credentialing; (2) curriculum and school organization; (3) textbooks; (4) statewide testing; (5) state and local government; and (6) school finance (Lawlor 1960, forward).

A strong but mixed reaction met this long-awaited report. On the one hand, the great bulk of the education profession felt that the recommendations generally were too conservative in educational philosophy and intent—a step back into the past. Consequently, this broad-based community generated a great deal of disdain and resentment toward the Commission's work.

On the other hand, elated cries were heard from various lay circles, especially from those who originally had urged the creation of the Commission or were on record as being critical of the schools. The vigilant *Sacramento Bee* claimed credit for its establishment and closely monitored its progress reports: “there is evidence, as the CBE [Council for Basic Education] says in its official bulletin, that the California Citizens Commission on the Schools ...created by the 1958 legislature at the suggestion of the McClatchy newspapers—may fire a ‘shot which will be heard around the educational world’” (“California School Probe” 1959). Long before the Commission had completed its work, the *Bee* heralded its joy about this work, concluding that:

*... to the Commission's great credit, it has remained faithful to its legislative mandate to leave no stone unturned in its probe, to seek out truth for truth's sake...if the commission gives its recommendations the same disciplined be, after analyzing the reams of testimony it took on the schools, its findings may the most important single influence upon California education in the last half century (Sacramento Bee, 23 August 1959).*

More than a year later, upon the appearance of the Lawlor-sponsored report, the *Bee* provided a complimentary summary of the Commission's labors. At the same time, it cast an uneasy eye to the future, seeking to affect legislative follow-up of this important report while simultaneously recognizing the inevitable negative reactions that would follow from special interest groups:

*This is no casual study. The findings gleaned in 50 public hearings held in every geographical corner of the state are mirrored in the conclusions. So is the testimony of more than 250 witnesses who appeared before the group.... This considered, the legislature should give the report their [sic] most painstaking attention. The urgings for emphasis on hard core curricula, for creating greater opportunity for the gifted, for returning prestige to the high school diploma, for introducing uniform and standard testing statewide—all deserve sympathetic consideration....*

*The legislature must be prepared for the most vigorous opposition to some of the proposals.... This will follow as surely as day and night, for this study attacks slavish disciples of ultra progressive education—those concerned with imagined trauma brought on by having to learn the three Rs--and they will fight hard core education to the hilt (Sacramento Bee, November 6, 1960).*

The most pertinent of the Commission's recommendations dealt with teaching credentials, and some of them bear a striking resemblance to portions of the soon-to-evolve Fisher Bill in the Legislature.

- Professors of teaching methods in schools of education should have experience in elementary and secondary schools.

- The organization and content of courses in education should be the responsibility of the entire educating institutions.
- All teacher education institutions should keep courses on methods to a minimum and encourage early observation and practice teaching.
- Fifth-year teacher education programs based on a paid internship for those who have received a bachelor's degree with little or no work in professional education should be expanded.
- Four credentials should be established: the Standard Elementary, the Standard Secondary, the Standard Junior College, and the Standard Administrative.

Considering the frequent departures by the Commission into other areas of investigation, the recommendation for specific credentials bore striking similarity to that developed by the Committee for Revisions of the Credential System, the statewide professional group described earlier. This was far from a coincidence, for Eli Obradovich, a State Department staff member at the time remembered the Chair of the Commission's Subcommittee on Credentials telephoning him to ask for recommendations regarding the credential structure. The Commission member told Obradovich that he was under the gun for time and had to present his report soon. Obradovich sent the caller a draft of the Committee's proposal, a project that been worked on extensively for over five years (Obradovich interview 1965).

The essence of the Commission's recommendations departed from traditional credential patterns in three ways: (a) a significant decrease in the number of educational methods courses; (b) a year of postgraduate study for all credential candidates; and (c) a required subject-matter major other than education. It was these three salient proposals which most separated the contending forces of credential reform as the time neared for the Legislature to act.

One illustrative division occurred within professional organizations for teachers. The CFT was small in terms of statewide membership and its small size had enabled it to become close-knit and able to speak forcefully and quickly on matters of concern to it. Its much larger rival, the California Teachers Association (CTA) often had to take a more guarded and even equivocal position on critical issues because of diverse and sometimes

opposing interests within its numerous affiliated local organizations. Essentially, the CFT was conservative in its outlook toward academic standards; its perspective resembled more that of the CBE and/or of the academic university professors than that of other organizations within the profession. It was generally pleased with the recommendations of the Citizens Advisory Commission. Where the CTA and most of the teachers, administrators and other professionals regarded the Commission with dislike and even hostility, the CFT could be considered an ally. Indeed, the *Sacramento Bee* in its January 4, 1961, editorial identified the CFT as a cohort of the Commission.

### **The Legislature Investigates**

The years 1959-1960, then, were banner years for full-scale investigations of public schools. In addition to the Citizens Advisory Commission and lengthy efforts of the Committee for Credential Revision, still another segment of the Legislature entered the picture. In April 1960, the Senate Fact Finding Committee on Education, another interim committee, opened its hearings. This committee was composed of at least three legislators who were to feature prominently in credential revision: Senator Hugo Fisher was a member; Senator Albert Rodda was its vice chair, later to become active in refining the Fisher Act and in the Ryan Act; Committee Chair was Donald Grunsky, who later carried CTA's unsuccessful bill to thoroughly overhaul the credential structure.

As usual, the Committee held a series of open hearings regarding credentials and engendered, as at the Citizens Advisory Commission hearings, a parade of individuals representing a kaleidoscope of particularized interests and testifying to specialized points of view was long. More than twenty organizations<sup>2</sup> formed an incredible array of wisdom

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The following list of organizations scheduled to speak illustrate vividly not only the range of interests which had entered the political arena, but also the difficulties and clashing that would beset policy-makers for the next ten years:

Academic Senate, University of California Berkeley  
Affiliated Teachers of California  
California Association for Adult Education  
California Association for Early Childhood Education  
California Association for Curriculum Development and Supervision  
California Association of School Administrators  
California Business Education Association  
California Council on Teacher Education  
California Federation of Teachers  
California Home Economics Association  
California Industrial Education Association  
California Junior College Association

during the two days of hearings on 26-27 April 1960. Principal among these multitudinous voices, of course, were those of the CTA, the State Department, the Citizens Advisory Commission, and university and college academic professors. The CTA presented its proposal for revising the credential structure, which included the following recommendations:

- Reduce drastically the number of credentials to three. Require five years of college preparation.
- Remove the numerous details of licensure from the overburdened Education Code and from the hands of the Legislature.
- Assign implementation of the rules for licensure to the State Board of Education.
- Establish a Teacher Licensure Commission, which would formulate the details necessary to establish a comprehensive and logical system of credentials.

CTA conceded that final authority for credentialing resides in the Legislature but sought to place the development of credential requirements within the profession itself—its long-term dream. This was a radical proposal from all but CTA's point of view; its reasoning was presented by Bob McKay, the CTA's veteran legislative advocate: “we are convinced that the teaching profession in its field, like other responsible professions, is uniquely qualified to determine qualifications for service in the classroom” (Senate Fact-Finding transcript 1960, 44).

Larson, the State Department's credential specialist, led this parade of witnesses—and his testimony highlighted many of the issues, which were to emerge prominently during the intense legislative contest soon to follow. Committee members questioned Larson closely regarding the Department's recommendation that teaching credentials require five years of college/university preparation.

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California Mathematics Council  
California Nurses Association  
California School Health Association  
California School Libraries Association  
California Speech and Hearing Association  
California Teachers Association  
Citizens Advisory Commission on the Public Schools  
Council of Directors and Supervisors of Vocational and Industrial Education  
San Francisco State College  
San Jose State College  
State Department of Education

Sen. Dilworth: *From the experience of teacher supply in recent years [there had been a shortage] is it practicable to suddenly demand five years of training in institutions of higher education?*

Larson: *This is one of the questions, which the State Board has very real, concern for, and I think that we need to think of one thing particularly. If you have standards which are rigid, if you have standards which are really standards and which require some reaching to reach, then the status of an elementary teacher becomes greater. We would feel that when you raise standards you tend to make it more attractive to get into this level of teaching and you get better teachers . . . and you also get more teachers (Senate Fact-Finding 1960, 38-39).*

Larson's answer clearly indicated that the Department and the State Board desired to raise standards for certification significantly beyond the norm across the nation.

Larson's extended appearance before the Fact-Finding Committee also set the stage, unrealized by any at the time, for a new concept that would have profound significance and impact for policy-makers the next five years. Early in Larson's testimony appeared the term "academic major," the core of heated controversy for the entire credential reform battle embodied by the Fisher Act—indeed, its defining issue. It was at this time that the State Board's new thrust became discernible. Under terse questioning by Rodda—who, as early as this hearing in April 1960, showed concern about proposed restrictive requirements for elementary teachers—Larson revealed the nebulous quality and difficulty of definition that was both to drive and to beset all those attempting to clarify the term "academic major."

Larson: *I can only give you my opinion as to what an academic major on the elementary school level is. This has not been decided by the State Board at this time. We have a structure at this time which is merely a framework, and the second phase of this would be to give specific requirements, specific credential requirements, and at that time an academic major would have to be defined. It isn't defined at this time, but it is the intent of the State Board that there shall be a major and it shall be in a subject matter field.*

Rodda: *I personally would like to know what a major consists of...*

Larson: *I'll be happy to talk a bit about some of the thinking in general about what an elementary teacher's subject matter major should consist of. Now we recognize that the job of an elementary teacher is rather broad. [An elementary teacher] teaches in a classroom, and teaches many different subjects. We recognize that we should have a very well prepared teacher for our elementary schools—as well as possible. Now when you ask an elementary teacher to begin specializing in the field . . . you limit that teacher's knowledge rather broadly in other fields. I would describe very briefly an academic major . . . as many people in California think of it as a rather broad major, let us say in the field of social sciences itself, including history and including some sociology and government. This type of thing, a rather broad major...This would be differentiated from a high school major which would ask and require more depth because the teacher . . . has less breadth to cope with when teaching a subject or several subjects.... Try to fit that academic major to the job the teacher must do....*

Rodda: *The point I'm trying to make is that your credential is requiring that everyone have a major.*

Larson: *That's right, sir . . . I should say that the State Board wants every teacher who teaches in California schools, and [who is] going to be licensed, to have a good liberal arts education . . . consist [ing] of a certain amount of depth in a certain area (Senate Fact-Finding transcript 1960, 13-14).*

Larson also presented a summary of the Board's proposed reform of the credential structure: five years of college; postponement of requirements for the fifth year; a subject matter/ academic major and elimination of the "education" major; reduction of credentials to four. Larson's testimony clearly showed the State Board's active interest in credential reform and initiative in seeking to attain these goals—an uncharacteristic behavior by a state education agency at that time. Larson might be considered to have been the star

witness at the hearing. He was required to spend more time before the Committee than any other witness and nearly every Committee member asked him specific questions.

Fisher, who arrived at the hearing after its commencement and during Larson's testimony, immediately leaped into the fray, questioning Larson closely on numerous major and minor facets of the Department's proposal. In so doing Fisher revealed his own acute knowledge of details and implications involved in the complex matter at hand. As early as these hearings Fisher made clear his intense concern about the following:

- The amount of professional education courses required of teacher candidates.
- The number of school administrators with an exclusively physical education background.
- The absence of subject matter emphasis in the training of teachers.
- The exclusive responsibility of college/university education departments to train teachers [rather than being joint function of liberal arts departments and education departments].

During the latter half of the two-day hearings Fisher up-staged everyone else on the Committee by pursuing such intense and knowledgeable questioning of witnesses that a picture began to emerge as to the most favorable—to him—credential proposals. This was particularly evident in his interaction with two witnesses—Edith Merritt of the California Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; and William Lawlor, Chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee on Education—who were virtually at opposite ends of the philosophical spectrum.

Fisher in effect badgered Merritt about her views on an appropriate subject matter background for an elementary teacher, opening his questioning with the statement, “I gather that you disagree primarily at the elementary school level with the requirements as to major and depth,” and never let her off the hook on the matter. When Lawlor's time came to testify, Fisher asked sharply, “Is it your feeling that the educational faculties alone are not adequately prepared to evaluate an applicant's educational background for teaching?” Lawlor replied, “Yes, our position is that such agencies are not adequately

prepared for this, plus the fact that a careful analysis by the subject matter departments and liberal arts departments would give a better evaluation of the candidate's actual background and ability in his field.” Fisher asked additional questions—in what could be seen as leading the witness, showed Lawlor’s priorities and Fisher's to be on a parallel path. Fisher's final question revealed his own position: “Would you say that the standard teaching credential which has been proposed [by Lawlor’s Commission], that insofar that it [would] require an appropriate academic subject major and an appropriate subject matter minor or preparation in a specialized area, that this is an improvement over the present system?” Lawlor replied, “Yes” (Senate Fact-Finding transcript 1960, 156-158; 180; 182).

As the Senate Fact-Finding Committee hearings ended, the formerly unstructured, nebulous mass of detailed information had divided into the two rather sharply defined camps—the professional education “establishment” *versus* the newly-emerged, conservative lay reformers—with a sizable number of less committed contestants situated precariously somewhere between the two major adversaries.

As part of its report to the general session of the 1961 Legislature, the Fact-Finding Committee issued a 194-page pamphlet covering twelve phases of California public (K-12) education. Chapter III of that report, dealing with teacher licensure, contained clear-cut recommendations for change in credentials. Written in readable, lucid informal style, this portion of the total report chalks out the issues at hand:

The report of the 1961 legislative Fact-Finding Committee contained the following recommendations:

1. “There is general dissatisfaction with the present system of teacher licensure. This dissatisfaction has been voiced by associations and individuals representing all segments of the teaching profession and school administration as well as the State Department of Education....”

“The existing system of teacher licensure has become awkward to administer and confusing to those who are affected by it. The present structure consists of some 57 separate teaching and administrative credentials, many of which could be combined or eliminated. Generally, the present teacher licensure system is not in keeping with current needs of public education and it is not based upon sound qualification requirements that make optimum contributions to the improvement of teaching standards in our public schools.”

2. “The State’s system of teacher licensure should be restructured to gain greater simplicity, clarity, and to assure optimum preparation on the part of those who would enter the teaching profession...”
3. “The application of the principles of teacher licensure to a specific teacher licensure structure is a complex matter, involving many widely different points of view... In view of this, it will be necessary for this committee to develop a composite teacher licensure structure which will not only be workable, but also acceptable to a majority of the factions concerned.”

### **Recommendations from the 1961 Legislative Fact-Finding Committee**

1. “The Legislature should enact a new teacher licensure statute containing the minimum structure that would assure adherence to the basic principles involved. The specific details regarding qualification standards, as well as the credential holder’s authorized level and areas of service, should be left to the State Board of Education. By doing this, the Legislature would be making a proper delegation of authority to the appropriate state agency.
2. The statute, upon which a new system of teacher licensure is based, should identify each type of license and its duration...

3. Implementation of the statutory licensure structure should be the responsibility of the State Board of Education...
4. The cost of the statutorily-created advisory committee on teacher licensure should be borne by the teaching profession through increased license fees (Senate Fact-Finding report 1960, 38-39)."

Following these recommendations, the report contained a careful analysis of the major points of view which had been conveyed to the Committee, along with an exposition of the major credential structure proposals of the State Department, the CTA, and the CFT.

Finally, and significantly, the report contained the full text of SB 623, the credential reform bill carried by Committee Chair Donald Grunsky, ostensibly emerging as a result of the deliberations of the Committee. SB 623 was co-authored by Senators Byrne, Donnelly, Fisher, Stiern, Farr, Rodda, Dolwig, and Murdy. A companion bill, SB 624, authorized the establishment of a teacher licensure commission composed of members of the profession—a move long sought by the CTA. SB 623 became informally regarded as a "CTA bill" and, significantly, "disappeared" during the same 1961 legislative session in which the Fisher bill emerged. SB 624, however, survived the legislative campaign, only to be vetoed by Governor Brown at the same time he signed the Fisher Act. According to the close-at-hand insights of Frank Mesple, Brown's former legislative secretary, "the boys said, '[expletive],' why should we give Grunsky [a Republican] the chance for a major bill, especially the way Grunsky beats us around the ears? Our own boys can and should do the job!" (Mesple interview, 1966)

### **The Fight Begins In Earnest**

In 1961, as a major issue of the time, credential reform had "arrived." Yet as sweeping as the issue was in the nation as a whole and especially in California, here the reformers broke into two factions: in one camp were those organizations and individuals strongly seeking to upgrade the quality of teachers and administrators by means of setting and

enforcing increased subject matter preparation requirements; in the other camp was most visibly represented by the CTA but included all professional educators. In essence, at least within the California legislative arena, the credential reform drive became a “beat CTA and the establishment” issue. At the most intense point of contention, antagonists representing the two camps met head-on. McKay, the respected and effective CTA lobbyist, met head-on with Fisher, the Senator from San Diego County.

In early 1961 McKay wrote a mocking column for the CTA newsletter about the Senator's credential reform efforts:

*A SINCERE desire to be helpful has gotten San Diego's able young Senator, Hugh [sic] Fisher, into a bit of academic hot water he hadn't anticipated and from which he's now ruefully trying to extricate himself.*

*As A RESULT, the mailman is daily lugging bulging bags of letters to members of both houses which take violent exception to “The Fisher Bill” dealing with teachers' credential...*

*THE QUESTION being asked around the Capitol, however, is whether anything he does to the bill now will remove the stigma perhaps unfortunately attached to the original version and whether, even if drastically overhauled, it won't still be the “The Fisher Bill” to thousands of concerned members of the profession all over the State (McKay 1961, 1; 4).*

McKay's satire was not lost on Fisher; it quickly became common knowledge in the Capitol that he was incensed by this patronization from the CTA's “old pro.” Four days later, the San Francisco *Chronicle* reported that:

*Senator Hugh [sic] Fisher (Dem., San Diego) has blocked issuance of credentials to Robert E. McKay, veteran lobbyist for the California Teachers Association....*

*The Senator said a McKay aide told him the teachers' lobby here is the "most efficient and most powerful." It supposedly can pass bills or defeat bills and get approval or a veto from the Governor (Chronicle 1961, 12).*

Credential revision became not only a contested political issue but also a personal contest between two forceful men—one long a lobbyist and accustomed to the halls of the Capitol, the other fresh to the Legislature but ambitious and able. Nonetheless, the personal drama ended somewhat abruptly when McKay's health broke:

*Complete and absolute rest was prescribed for Bob McKay when his physician ordered him into Sutter Hospital in Sacramento last week....*

*It has often been said that the pace in Sacramento during regular sessions of the legislature can be rough. The Washington DC tempo can be equally as intense. The CTA Governmental Affairs Executive has been playing both fields in recent months (CTA Letter 1961, 1).<sup>3</sup>*

Fisher's strong interest in and knowledge about the credential issue were not feigned. Indeed, it had become a deep and compelling mission for him. Several versions describe its origins. One, from William Barton, McKay's CTA successor, bitterly recalled that his organization "had been pounding for about seven years for reductions in credentials and had made some proposals. Then Fisher came along and grabbed the credit. He hates [educational] methods courses. If he'd had his way, teachers wouldn't have any" (Barton interview 1965). In another, from Alvar Yelvington, a legislative staff researcher who became deeply involved in writing the initial form of the Fisher bill, saw a close link between Governor Brown and Fisher: "Reform in teacher education was one of the Governor's major goals in 1959. Whatever educational reform bill came out it would have number SB 57. The Governor took an active interest in the 'bright young man,' Hugo Fisher, and tapped him to carry this and other bills for him" (Yelvington interview

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Michael Manley, a former legislative staff member, believed that Bob McKay may have been pulled off this assignment because he had chosen to work with Senator Grunsky (a Republican) on a CTA bill, rather than with Senator Albert Rodda, an influential Democrat who had a better chance to get CTA's ideas across (Manley interview 1966).

1966). A more biting and subjective view came from Roy Simpson, the retired State Superintendent of Public Instruction who had been close to the action at the time: "It was an issue for Mr. Fisher to gain notoriety . . . It was a vehicle to get known. And the timing was right. The public was ignorant and they believed all that was fed them" (Simpson interview 1965). Fisher himself was not reluctant, if not totally forthcoming, to tell of the source of his interest:

*"While in law school, my wife, who was going to college at the time, complained about the education courses she had to take to get a teaching credential. I paid little attention at the time. But later when I was elected to the Senate, I figured that teacher training would be one of the major problem areas. I delved into it thoroughly and got to know a great deal about the subject" (Fisher interview, 1966).*

In addition, Fisher made no bones about his antipathy for those "jock strap" physical education majors who had become school administrators, and this disdain was to remain throughout the battle to have his bill passed.

While Fisher was the prime mover, there is ample evidence that Governor Brown had much more than a passing interest in the success of the freshman Senator's efforts. On January 3, 1961, the San Francisco *Chronicle* reported that one of the Governor's major education recommendations to the Legislature was "simplify teaching credentials, emphasize 'solid subjects' and add special programs for gifted children" (*Chronicle* 1961). Philosophically, as well as politically, the Governor was likely influenced by at one least pivotal figure, Girvetz, the Governor's advisor on education and a Professor of Philosophy at the University of California Santa Barbara. As early as November 12, 1959, Girvetz called the Governor's attention to the nation's great debate about its school system: "It has at last become interested in the *content of* public education and the quality of education, and not just in school taxes, school buildings, and extra-curricular activities" (Hendrick 1964, 125-126). His report to the Governor included charges against teacher education and certification that by late 1959 had become familiar to many. Licensing requirements for teachers tended to place too much emphasis on "so-called professional courses, and correspondingly less on subject matter; that large numbers of potential candidates, who excel in mastery of subject matter as well as in

teaching ability are discouraged from entering the profession by the certification requirements” (Formhals interviews, 1965; 1966). Another influential figure was Alan J. Moscov, one of the of the Governor’s most trusted staff ties to CITE, who throughout the legislative struggle stayed close to the issue. Moscov answered letters dealing with the subject, helped the sponsors with press releases, sought out people to testify for the “Governor's bill.” In these and other ways the Governor and his staff lent their active support, much of it secluded from public view. Although several credential revision bills were introduced during the 1961 session, the only one to receive real consideration was that introduced by Fisher, supported by the State Board, and endorsed by the Governor.

### **Legislative Battles Over SB 57**

After the Fisher bill's introduction on January 9, 1961, the storm did not take long to form.<sup>4</sup> Groups of various persuasions—but falling into the two major camps previously described—sought to influence its content. These special interests made their desires known by letter, telephone call, and personal contact.

On 8 March, the Senate Committee on Education held its initial hearing on the bill. Included among the supporters were: Louis Heilbron, President of the State Board; Thomas Braden, Vice President, State Board; Stanley Sheinbaum, CITE Executive Director; William Lawlor, Chair of the Citizens Advisory Commission; William Irvine, Stanford University English Professor; and Jack Crowther, Deputy Superintendent, Los Angeles city schools. During his opening testimony Heilbron affirmed that the bill was a child of the State Board and had resulted from the State Department’s hearings, although it is now clear that there were other key “parents” of the bill’s textual content.

The amendment process began even before the bill had its first hearing, when numerous minor revisions were made in the original form of the bill—the number varies with the teller. It continued during March, but most of these changes were relatively minor, tending to somewhat soften the effect of the original bill and to enlarge the spread of the

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“academic” tent, incorporating professional specialties that it at first threatened to exclude from being valid for credential purposes. However, in late March Harold Spears, Superintendent of San Francisco schools, proposed a more drastic revision, to delete the fifth year for elementary teachers. Robert Formhals, a long-time CSBA lobbyist, recalled the behind-the-scenes dynamics on this point:

*“I talked with Hugo Fisher, and an agreement was reached that we would give our support if the fifth year would not be required. Fisher said “O.K.,” but that if he could get enough support without having to give this concession he would double-cross us and go for the fifth year. He was quite open about it” (Formhals interview 1965, 1965).*

Despite these activities, the bill had only minor difficulty getting out of the Senate with approval.

Nevertheless, it began to run into rough weather in the Assembly. On 5 April a CTA sponsored bill, authored by Assembly Member Carlos Bee, was heard before the Assembly Education Committee. For the next two weeks, CTA's strength on the credential question was at its greatest legislative height but, even at that, the Bee bill, AB 1772, never really had a good chance for passage. Instead, the CTA strength was reflected in its ability to harass the legislative path of SB 57, which was destined for a fairly rough struggle at the hands of the Assembly Education Committee. It faced its biggest political struggle on 19 April. Arthur Corey, CTA's Executive Director, asserted that SB 57 did not raise standards but instead was “attack on the professional training of teachers.”

For two weeks between two Assembly Education Committee hearings (19 April and 2 May)—a remarkably short time for a political issue of this magnitude—the fate of the Fisher Bill was far from clear. The doubt was apparently so serious as to cause the Governor to step forward to speak on the issue at his press conference on 28 April. Since his original statements four months previously, Brown had kept himself well in the

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SB 57 was introduced during one of the first days of the new legislative session -- usually an indication of Fisher's political savvy.

background on this hot issue but now felt compelled to speak out in an effort to save a key part of his administration's 1961 program priorities.

Brown: *I want to emphasize this morning Senate Bill 57. I want to declare my unequivocal support, and I intend to do everything that's proper to urge the members of the Assembly Education Committee to approve it in its present form... I regard Senate Bill 57 as one of the most important bills of the entire session. . . .*

Question: *Governor, before you get away from that subject, isn't the bill completely changed, though, largely changed from what you first endorsed?*

Brown: *I think there have been some very substantial amendments to it, but the purpose of the bill—to see that teachers major in solids in contrast to working on how to teach courses—is basic in the bill and it's still there...*

Question: *Has the CTA expressed their opposition to you to that bill?*

Brown: *Yes, they have. They made a personal call upon this office and told me that by action of their legislative committee they were opposed to it . . . they didn't want the bill signed...*

Question: *Did you know of, or have you heard of, any legislators who were threatened with political reprisal by the CTA if they didn't go along with their credentials bill?*

Brown: *Well, some of the legislators have advised me that they were heavily lobbied, let me put it that way.*

Question: *Do you see any compromise between Fisher's bill and the CTA's bill?*

Brown: *No, I do not. (McCarthy transcript 1961)*

Actually, the Governor used more than mere verbal muscle to put his point across. Hugh MacColl, a veteran CFT lobbyist, who was very close to some of the key participants in the crisis at the time, recalled that:

*“... behind the scenes are where people don’t have to take a stand in public and where the real work is done....” When the Fisher Bill was being considered it was bottled up in the Assembly Education Committee. The Governor twisted arms, cajoled and threatened certain legislators, saying that they’d better forget their own bills unless the Fisher thing came out... “He told [a key liaison man working for the Governor], “Get it out, I don’t care how” (MacColl interview 1966).*

Barton, the veteran CTA lobbyist, told a very similar story: “The arm-twisting began; the reapportionment bill was being drafted at this time and these two Republicans [the bill lacked but two Republican votes to clear the Committee] got the word that they would be apportioned right out of their districts as incumbents unless they voted the Fisher Bill out. Then new hearings were held [even though the bill was technically dead] and it was voted out” (Barton interview 1966). The Governor had used every political stratagem at his command to move legislators and was effective in this regard.

Meanwhile, Fisher and his aides were working the political process hard; Fisher indicated that he had the most active support from CITE, which had recruited university faculty members to push for the bill, which they did very actively. The CSBA was also helpful; its only quarrel was with the five year requirement. Fisher agreed with CSBA in this case and amended it out in the Senate—but it is not clear at what point Fisher did this, if indeed he did, for the five year requirement was a part of the final version of the law. Fisher and his staff also obtained the militant support of various “far-right” groups who figuratively pounded their legislators, urging a vote for the bill (Fisher interview 1966).

The State Board itself acted behind the scenes to move the bill out of the deadlock caused by CTA, its affiliated organizations, and other special interest groups. The *Sacramento Bee* added its weight to the drive on the very day of the crucial “last chance” Assembly Education Subcommittee meeting. The *Bee* exhorted that “a vote for SB 57 is clearly a

vote for better teachers and school administrators and, thereby, a vote for a better educational system” (*Sacramento Bee*, May 2, 1961). Opposing and intensely committed sides applied immense pressure upon legislators. But 2 May they approved SB 57, a bill that earlier had technically been put on ice—in effect, killed. The result was quietly reported: “An Assembly Education subcommittee recommended approval of the controversial Fisher Bill dealing with teaching credentials and teacher training. The measure, opposed by the powerful California Teachers Association, moved closer to enactment” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 3, 1961). Almost anticlimactically, on May 24, the bill received final Assembly Education Committee approval and, on June 12, passed the full Assembly by a vote of 66 to 9.

A casual observer would hardly have been aware that this major bill had narrowly missed being detoured into obscurity and had caused some of the most intense political heat to individual legislators that many had ever experienced. So intense was the fight that a knowledgeable former committee staff member, Michael Manley, remarked about Fisher, “Nobody but George Miller [a tough State Senator], Jesse Unruh or Hugo Fisher could have got that bill through; nobody else could have taken the pressure” (Manley interview, 1966).

Already passed in the Senate, it was only necessary for the bill to go to a joint conference committee of the two houses to iron out any discrepancies, which was done speedily. The Governor happily signed the bill into law in June 1961 and, as he did so, pointed with pride at this newly minted legislation, claiming it as a major political achievement for his administration. This new law “sets standards to prevent professional education from encroaching upon the subject matter training of teachers” (Brown 1963). After an epic and pioneer struggle in a major area of educational policy, the hard-fought battle had resulted in radically new structure for teacher preparation and credentialing.

## **Summary**

The Licensing and Certificated Personnel Law of 1961, the Fisher Act, brought to life five major changes in credentialing for educators.

1. It reduced the number of credentials to five from fifty-seven: Standard Elementary (K-6); Standard Secondary (7-12); Standard Administrative; Standard Junior College (13-14); and Standard Designated Subjects. This credential structure also created for the first time a separate license for community college teaching.
2. It required all candidates, both elementary and secondary, to complete a year of postbaccalaureate study, a “fifth year,” for full certification. This change made parallel therequirements for elementary and secondary credentials.
3. It required all candidates, both elementary and secondary, to complete an “academic” undergraduate major and minor in their teaching fields for standard certification. It required elementary candidates to complete a “diversified major” consisting of a subject matter major and minor appropriate for elementary teaching. This change significantly increased the responsibility of academic departments in the education of teachers while at the same time significantly reducing the amount of course work in education and pedagogy.
4. It aligned the courses a secondary teacher could be assigned to teach with to a candidate's major and minor subject matter preparation. This change meant that schools and districts could no longer assign teachers to teach any subject, as had been possible with earlier credentials.
5. It required candidates for administrative credentials to have an undergraduate major in an academic field. This change was designed to reduce the predominance of physical education majors among administrators.

Yet these changes were far from clarified on a pragmatic basis. Although state law, the Fisher Act lacked the regulations needed for it to have major impact on long-term practice in the state. The State Board was the instrument for that policy development and enforcement. In this arena the contending warriors soon began to assemble. The battle lines, drawn in the early 1950s and clearly delineated in the intense action, appeared again in the clashes and pressures exerted upon individual Board members as they sought to carry out the Legislature's will and their own notions of the new law's intent and effects.

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